DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 352 583 CG 024 688

AUTHOR Nearine, Robert J.
TITLE Study of Studies on Effective Dropout Prevention Programs.
PUB DATE [89]
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Dropout Prevention; Dropout Research; *Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; Potential Dropouts; *Program Effectiveness; *Secondary School Students

ABSTRACT

Eleven studies on effective dropout prevention programs are excerpted in this paper. The studies were published from 1981-1989 and include conference papers, journal articles, school district reports, and evaluations. The studies are analyzed to determine who are the students who have dropped out of school and which dropout prevention programs really work. It is claimed that a review of the studies suggests: (1) there are no universally accepted descriptors for dropouts; (2) students leave school because of failure, irrelevancy, and alienation and that this may be exacerbated by pregnancy or other so-called "unacceptable behaviors"; and (3) the issue of effectiveness was not discussed in the studies although it seems obvious that a successful dropout prevention program should reduce dropping out behaviors. The paper concludes that the findings imply that programs designed to reduce dropout prone behavior will continue to be developed on the basis of common sense; long-term studies should be conducted given the supposition that connectiveness and the reduction of alienation will lead to school retention; short-term studies should be conducted to determine what kinds of programs students like, and the relevance of these programs to perceived district and student needs and objectives; and the issue of alienation and connectiveness for teachers and for students should be carefully examined. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

STUDY OF STUDIES

ON

EFFECTIVE DROPOUT PREVENTION

PROGRAMS

Robert J. Nearine

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Robert J. Nearine

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Office of Evaluation, Research, and Testing
Hartford Public Schools
249 High Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06103

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG024688

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction

II. Abstracts

2. Correlates of Successful Dropout Prevention Strategies for at Risk Children in Schools.
Richard E. Baecher, Terry Cucchelli, and Anthony Baratta.

3. Looking at America's Dropouts: Who are They?
Larry W. Barber and Mary C. McClellan.

4. Indicators of Effective Programming for School to Work Transition Skills Among Dropouts.
C. Batsche, T. McCarty, and P. Klitzke.

5. A Working Document on the Workout Problem in Boston Public Schools.
Yahel Camayd-Freixas, Leslie Horst, and Christine Robinson.

6. Using Microcomputers to Implement Mastery Learning with High-Risk Minority Adolescents.
N. Christie and D.L. Sabers

7. Study of High School Dropouts in Appalachia.
J.C. Cox et al.

8. First Year project: A Study of Alienation and Committment in Five Urban Districts.
William A. Firestone and Sheila Rosenblum.

9. Detroit Early School Leavers Project: A Profile of Dropouts.
Nicholas Poulos.

10. Program Responses- Their Nature and Effectiveness.
Texas School Dropout Survey Project.

11. Migrant Drop-out Study.
E. Springstead et al.

III. Study of Studies

12. Analysis

I8. Conclusions

19. Implications

INTRODUCTION

Children dropping out of school is a problem which effects cities and towns across the nation. To cope with this problem, a variety of dropout prevention programs have been developed with a stated purpose to reduce the drop out rate. Programs were generally developed around the assumption that if students at risk could be identified, school and district dropout rates could be reduced.

Research on effective dropout prevention programs has been confounded by the lack of consensus as to which variables are good predictors of dropout proneness. In consequence, studies have focused on such indicators as race, group status, socioeconomic status, standardized test scores, poor attendance, indicators of school success, and histories of non-promotion. While these and other factors have been carefully examined, research suggests that these indicators are symptomatic, rather that causal in nature.

Despite a lack of research concensus, a number of programs have been identified that appear to substantially impact upon dropping-out behavior. The purpose of this study is to identify some of these programs, determine whether the reported success appears to be supported by research, and examine these programs for commonalities. A subsequent purpose of this study is to obtain information which can be used to assist this District's program development process at a future point in time.

Baecher, R. E., et al. (1989). Correlates of successful dropout prevention strategies for at risk children in schools. (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA).

1. "We seek to answer ... three questions: how much impact did SSPP [Fordham's Stay In School Partnership Project] have on the attendance rate of at risk children?; what effects did it exercise on their academic achievement?; and what types of practices and strategies were most effective in this setting?"

3. "[A] longitudinal evaluation design combines ... [the] continual collection of relevant data on student characteristics, services, and results: the interrelationships between specific project goals acting to accomplish them, and assessing their overall impact ... ."

"Three elementary schools in ... East Harlem have been partners [in SSPP] ... since September 1986. Sixty children ... grades 1 to 4 and their parents are participating: 24% are black and 66% are Hispanic. These children [who have more than 15 absences in any academic year, fail to make adequate progress in school, achieve below their expected age grade level, and were likely to be retained in grade and/or referred to special educational services and] were selected by classroom teachers and building principals, in cooperation with social service and educational personnel from Fordham."

"These children and their families received play therapy, counselling, advocacy, consultation, family problem solving, ... one to one tutoring, individualized instruction, [and] parent workshops. In addition, ... teachers and ... administrators received in-service training on issues and practices related to at-risk prevention."

5. "A combination of data sources were identified to monitor SSPP impact. [These included attendance lists, Kaufman K-TEA, Childhood Level of Living Scale, Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory, Levels of Social Service Form, logs, ... lists of referrals, workshop evaluation questionnaires, and questionnaires and interviews]."

6. "Within two years, absentism decreased significantly... ."

7. "Results yielded significant differences [for services] among all categories across sites ... ."

"No significant effects in reading and math have been noted as a result of structured tutoring."

14. "... this group of case managers ... rated the level of childhood care as neglectful... across all sites... ."

15. "... the results for special education referrals are very positive."

18. "... probably the most significant change ... was parental involvement."

Barber, L. W. & McClellan, M. C. (1987). "Looking at America's dropouts: who are they?" Phi Delta Kappan, 69 (3), pp 264-267.

264. "We undertook the study ... to show just how discrepant the reporting practices of school districts are, in the hope that the information ... would demonstrate the need for a workable defination of dropouts... ."

"The study population included 17 large city school districts that in 1984 voluntarily submitted their dropout reports to the Phi Delta Kappa Center on Evaluation, Development, and Research. We examined the reports in three ways. We isolated as many unique codes as possible that were used to categorize students as dropouts, withdrawn, transferred or excluded. In addition, we compiled a list of the reasons students give for dropping out. And we documented the range of definitions of dropouts used by school districts."

267. "The definition of a dropout varied from district to district."

"Students tend to drop out in the months of February and March or in the summer following the tenth grade."

"The 'classic' dropout exibited poor attitudes towards school, was likely to be failing, was behind in academic progress, had a lower grade point average, and was probably male."

"... 'the work oriented dropout' ... [was] more likely to be male, to have slightly better than average grades, and to have a slightly higher than average number of credits. ... The female counterparts of these work oriented dropouts were the homemakers ... whose grade point averages were above passing but did not perceive school as necessary to accomplish their goals of setting up households and raising families."

"Another group of students, the 'intellectual elite', ... saw school as irrelevent, [and] ... 'renounced the system' despite their ability to succeed in it."

"Students characterized as 'family supporters' were perceived to be unusually responsible and aware of the need for education. But their parents felt that the children had an obligation to help the family economically."

"For another group, the 'cultural isolates,' school was not a pleasant place because of language problems and social distance from other students."

Batsche, C., McCarty, T., & Klitzke, P. (1984). Indicators of effective programming for school to work transition skills among dropouts. Normal, IL: Illinois State University.

6. "The purpose of this study was to examine characteristics of programs in which students were enrolled and to determine which activities were most effective in dealing with dropouts."

"Seventy-six exemplary programs for dropouts were selected from a study conducted by the Wisconsin Vocational Study Center ... . 274 programs were identified ... . The 274 responses were reviewed and 76 programs were identified that specifically served ... dropouts or potential dropouts from high school. The 76 exemplary programs were used as a sample ... ."

"A survey was designed and mailed to the directors ... ." The survey included questions concerning the status and size of the program, the number of dropouts served ..., and the funding source ... ."

8. "Surveys were returned from 44 of the 76 programs ... and represented 26,052 dropout students."

9. "Most effective program descriptors: self concept development, work attitude/habits, interpersonal/life skills, motivation, work experience, employability skills, basic academic skills, job training skills [Table 11]."

Camayd-Freixas, Y., Horst, L., & Robinson, C. (1986). A working document on the dropout problem in Boston Public Schools. Boston, MA: Boston Public Schools.

1. "This study consists of three parts: review on research studies on the causes of school dropout[s], statistical analysis of BPS dropouts, [and] a review of prevention/intervention programs [and] program effectiveness."

"There are four major areas associated with dropouts: a series of factors associated with poverty and lower socioeconomic status, and ... the local economy; school failure ...; getting into trouble; ... [and] alienation from school ... ."

3. "Effective programs ... are grouped as follows: social support programs, academic remediation/development programs, alternative programs, [and] work experience."

"Most BPS districts have counselling programs, but generally lack racial/multicultural focus, teacher advocacy components, caring community models, school based child care, [and] peer programs." ... academic remediation programs serve only a limited number of students ... [and lack] teacher responsibility and teacher culture programs, small class size in an empowerment environment model, [and] teaching clusters.

"[There is a] serious dirth of alternative programs. [There are] sucessful models of work study programs in some districts, none in others ...."

"BPS needs comprehensive dropout prevention programs that combine social supports, academic interventions, and program alternatives."

Christie, N. & Sabers, D. L. (1989). Using microcomputers to implement mastery learning with high-risk and minority adolescents. (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 326 178).

"The setting for this study was a basic education component of a summer youth program designed to increase chances of high risk adolescents, mostly minorities, whose ages ranged from 14-18, to experience more positive academic and employment outcomes. The instructional program used in both experimental and control classrooms emphasized mastery learning of a selected set of mathematics and reading/language arts objectives. Pretests and posttests based on the objectives were developed using the Academic Instructional Measurement System. Of the four sites used, only one was the experimental site where the mastery learning program was implemented using the microcomputer. Quantitative assessment of the experimental program was provided by comparing the effect sizes of the experimental group with the effect sizes of the remaining three sites. Observations were made of the instruction given in the experimental classroom as well as one of the other program sites."

"The results provide additional evidence of the effectiveness of mastery learning techniques with high risk and minority students. Students at each location made sizeable gains in both mathematics and reading/language arts during a fairly short time period. Although the quantitative results did not show the computer setting to be more effective than the non-computer setting, the qualitative analyses of these two settings revealed educational benefits for high risk students in the computer environment that may not be reflected in a measure of academic achievement. These students demonstrated an increased sense of social integration and bonding, factors that may [help] to reduce dropout[s]."

Cox, J. L., et al. (1985). Study of high school dropouts in Appalachia. Triangle Park, NC: Center for Education Studies, Research Triangle Institute.

vii. "RTI conducted a study to determine: the nature and extent of the drop out problem in Appalachia, the nature and extent of programs to address the drop out problem in Appalachia, [and] what exemplary program activities might be recommended ... ."

x. "Seven of the Appalachian states provided data on the number of dropouts by various drop out characterics. These data indicated the major reasons for dropping out to be poor academic achievement and related reasons, financial, and marriage and pregnancy. No significant differences were noted between urban and rural dropouts."

xi. "... The nature and extent of programs that address the dropout problem in Appalachia ... was obtained from the Appalachian states and school districts, and a method was developed for reporting this information. ... telephone contact was made with appropriate state-level personnel to note state initiatives ..., telephone contact was made with the local development districts to identify programs, and the 1,033 Appalachian school districts were contacted by mail... . Information from these sources plus a review of the literature ... were used to develop a reporting method."

37. "... A tentative listing of seven clusters of program activities ... [included] tutorial, alternative curriculum on classes, work related activities, counselling/advising, attitudinal/self awareness activities, attendance-centered activities, and parent involvement."

48. "Absent in the most critical set of components is identification of cause/need and planning based upon cause/need."

Firestone, W. A. & Rosenblum, S. (1987). First year project: A study of alienation and committment in five urban districts. Philadelphia, PA: Applied Research Project, Research for Better Schools. (A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC).

1. "The study has two objectives: to contribute to the general understanding of alienation and committment in education, [and] to derive action plans and recommendations ... to improve the quality of education in the five cities."

3. "Data were collected from two inner city comprehensive high schools in each of the five cities... [and] on the administration of high schools throughout each of the five cities. ... in all over 300 individuals in ten high schools and 5 districts were interviewed."

4. "Interviews were open-ended but designed to obtain information on major categories in the conceptual framework - district factors, school factors, and the different dimension of committment. ... questions varied with the respondents' position."

A comparative qualitative approach to data analysis ... link[ed], two strategies ... . The major themes of the interviews ... [were reviewed] to identify... A series of variables on which ... we could rate this school."

5. "Because the study is still in progress it is too early to speak definitively about ... major findings. However, the general outlines of the analysis have become quite clear."

2. "Teacher and student committment are highly independant. As teachers committment declines ... [they blame] others, including both student and administrators. This ... blaming leads teachers to withdraw from students by failing to explain directions at length ... ,[trading] quiet for low academic demands, and even pushing students out the room. Student committment then drops ... [leading] to poor academic performance and then disruptive behavior ... . These behaviors reduce teacher committment still more and the cycle continues."

6. "Student committment can be increased through respect and relevance ... . When students believe that adults respect them by providing them with support, ... they become more committed ... . Students are more inclined to participate in the academic enterprise ... when they can see the connection between what they are doing in school and the jobs they will get after they leave school."

"Teacher committment can be increased through shared influence, support, and acceptance. ...[they] are more committed when they know ... they are accepted and appreciated by administrators and colleagues."

7. "We did not find any district characteristics that had any strong association with either student or teacher committment."

Poulos, N. (1986). Detroit early school leavers project: a profile of dropouts. Detroit, MI: Public Schools, Office of Instructional Improvement.

3. "A task force comprising many departments ... was convened to address the problem of dropouts ... . Based on the committee's ultimate thrust, a survey form was designed ... to obtain ... information on early school leavers. Pertinent data were obtained ... concerning students who left school prematurely during the 1982-84 school years."

"School system attendance offices were given in-service training ... [in] interview techniques and ... use of the survey instrument."

"Pertinent data were analyzed, tabularized, and/or described."

4. "... a total of 1,857 attempts were made ... to interview ... dropout respondents. ... approximately 1,000 attempted contacts ... for which no relevant information was available [were made]."

19. "... 42% of the girls and 4% of the boys ... had dropped out ... for reasons of pregnancy or fatherhood. Aside from this, ... the most frequently cited school-related reasons ... were ... failing grades and school was a boring experience ... . The next most cited reason ... was suspension or expulsion."

"Program responses - their nature and effectiveness." (1986). Texas school dropout survey project, Vol. 6. San Antonio, TX: Intercultural Development Research Assoc. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 333 288).

"The study describes a survey conducted to identify and evaluate in-school and out-of-school programs designed to address the dropout problem in Texas, explaining how program descriptions and characteristics, as reported by 99 survey respondents, were reviewed and condensed in order to generate profiles of programs at the individual and aggregate level. Program descriptions were developed in terms of three major categories: administration, instruction, and outcomes, with findings suggesting that a majority of the reported programs had academic goals (91%), a focus on instruction (55%), counselling (46%), and program completion (41%) as a desired outcome. Program characteristics were summarized in two categories; organizations and support. ... a prototype of a dropout program is provided."

Springstead, E. et al. (1981). Migrant drop-out study. 1980-1981. Final evaluation. Corpus Christi, TX: Education Service Center Region 2. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 247 039).

"The 1980-1981 project sought to extend the dropout prediction methods ... by using a broader sample and examine [ing] the effectiveness of counselling in dropout prevention. Over 1,200 migrant students in 35 ... school districts ... completed a survey regarding school attitudes, family problems, school participation, financial problems, and school performance."

"Results were similar to those from the previous year and showed that financial concerns, lack of active participation in class activities, clubs, and school functions, and poor academic performance significantly contributed to dropout. The study identified 120 migrant students as potential dropouts and these students received individual and group counselling during the year.

"Data suggested what while counseling may be an effective strategy in dropout prevention, counseling resources are too limited to provide more than minimal service to migrant students." ... The report includes eight recommendations regarding dropout testing and counseling for the program's 1981-1982 year."

ANALYSIS

Across this country, communities both large and small, as well as the nation as a whole, have long been concerned about the numbers of students who fail to complete their high school education. In order to determine why students drop out and what can be done about it, available research data were examined. This examination was designed to obtain at least partial answers to two facets of this concern: who are the students who have dropped out of school and which dropout prevention programs really work? By tying these answers together, it should be possible to develop local programs which work. These programs should be based on the assumption that to be effective, programs must address identified dropout causes or student needs (Cox et al., 1985).

As a working definition, the U.S. Census Bureau defines a dropout as a person of high school age who is not enrolled in school and is not a high school graduate. While other readily available statistics suggest that many of these dropouts are minorities, males, and come from an inner city (e.g. the Hartford Public Schools), neither the definitions nor the statistics explain by themselves why the problem is so important. By strong inference these data suggest that a student without a high school education will have difficulty obtaining work, subsequent problems with work retention and/or promotion, a relatively limited income, and the probability that a slack economy will lead to lay offs or terminations (Camayd-Freixas et al. 1986). Thus, the dropout becomes a long-term economic and societal concern.

In order to ameliorate the economic aspects of the dropout problem, the President and the Nation's Governors have set as one national goal

the expectation that the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent by the year 2000. This has effectively established a national priority for dropout prevention which is obviously not totally altruistic in nature. Yet despite this emergent concern, much of the current literature regarding dropouts and dropout prevention is based on traditional wisdom, common sense, and conjecture, with little attention given to the collection, or use, of appropriate research data. While school personnel have designed a multitude of dropout prevention programs in an attempt to reduce local or state-wide dropout rates, the literature suggests that even the programs which are deemed successful were not based on the accurate identification of "at risk" students, nor have they conclusively demonstrated a reasonable degree of success.

Since an effective dropout prevention effort should be tailored to meet the identified needs of a given population of students who are judged to be at risk, one must first identify these students. Barber and McClellan (1987) attempted to shed some light on this identification process by surveying 17 large city school districts where dropouts were reported and, after reviewing these district reports, determining and classifying drop out characteristics. Their first finding was that their was no consistent definition of a dropout from district to district.

To cope with this problem the Phi Delta Kappa researchers collapsed their data so as to categorize dropout students across districts. They reported that students typically left school for five general reasons; they were doing poorly in school, they did not perceive school as necessary to accomplish their particular goals, they saw school as being irrelevant, student work was needed to support the family, or school was not a pleasant place for them to be. While the Barber and McClellan

(1987) study provides broad categorical reasons for dropping out of school, neither this, nor the other studies which were reviewed specifically attempts to describe the dropout, nor do these studies directly link reasons for early leaving with possible retention strategies.

Firestone and Rosenblum (1987) build on the school alienation, or unpleasantness, concept in a preliminary analysis of their data. Here they suggest that teacher and student commitment is highly interdependent and as one declines, so does the other. They further note that teacher support leads to commitment, which in turn produces, or at least influences, a connection between what is happening in school and the students' perceived future. These tentative findings tend to reinforce the Barber and McClellan (1987) data by suggesting that for the students who are classified as cultural isolates, intellectual elite, and to some extent work oriented dropouts, an effective dropout prevention program must incorporate three factors; it must provide a sense of connection to and with the school or program, it must be interesting and by extension challenging, and the program must be relevant to perceived students needs.

Camayd-Freixas' et al. (1986) analysis of Boston Public School data suggests that there are four areas associated with dropping out. These include low socioeconomic status, school failure, getting into trouble, and school alienation. While the areas of school failure and school alienation fit with other reported findings (Camayd-Freixas et al. 1986; Barber & McClellan, 1987; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1987) adds the issues of poverty and lower socioeconomic status to the dropout equation. Whether these latte factors are associated with the present economy, thus

inferring that students are leaving school in order to obtain work, is somewhat unclear.

The Camayd-Frexias' et al. (1986) listing of areas associated with early leaving is also less than specific. More importantly, the study does not suggest how this leaving could have been prevented. Although a series of effective programs are listed measures of effectiveness (e.g. reducing the dropout rate) are not discussed. The study also fails to note that since Massachusetts, and cities like Boston, have been plagued with the current recession, reduced employment opportunities might be expected to reduce the dropout rate. Neither drop out figures nor trends are discussed in the Boston report, nor were they considered in the other studies which were examined. Again the issues of how to identify potential dropouts, address their needs through appropriate programming, and determine whether the program is effective remain conjectural.

In another study, Poulos (1986) examined Detroit early school leavers by reviewing statistics and interview data. He reported that the most common factors for withdrawl seemed to be pregnancy and fatherhood, followed by school related reasons, and by suspension or expulsion.

Although available data suggest that two of the most prominent explanations as to why the students leave school are alienation toward school and a lack of school relevance, another factor must also be considered. Students may be forced out of school for what can be termed behavioral problems. This suggestion is supported by Cox (1985); Camayd-Freixas et al. (1986); Poulos (1987), Barber & McClellan (1987); and Firestone & Rosenblum (1987). Each of these studies suggest that alienation may lead to a lack of commitment and this lack of commitment, or connection, tends to be reinforced by negative behaviors. Ironically,

one wonders whether parenthood, getting into trouble, and suspension/expulsion represent forced withdrawals and thus fall under Barber and McClellan's (1987) grouping of cultural isolates for whom school is not a pleasant place in which to be.

Despite the lack of data-based information, one can logically assume that at least four factors must be addressed if a dropout prevention program is to be successful. Programs must reduce alienation and the concommitant lack of commitment by providing supportive services, these services must be relevant, the program must be interesting, and these activities must demonstrate a reduction or amelioration of dropping out or pre-dropping out behavior. Unfortunately, none of the studies reviewed listed or described programs, or program components, which could be judged successful on the basis of this dropout criteria. While Baecher, et al. (1989) reported findings of school improvement, with changes occurring in grades 1 through 4, their ultimate impact on dropout reduction will not be determined for some time. Although effectiveness must presume that services were targeted toward students who had excessive absences, inadequate school progress, and the potential for retention and/or special education referral, selection specifics (p. 3) were not provided. Despite these limitations, the study suggests that the program was student oriented, was of interest, and was designed to support the student, thus presumably reducing both student and parent alienation. Whether these services were deemed relevant or even appropriate to student needs was not discussed in the study.

Other reviewed studies provided even less data to support programs which were listed for effectiveness. Batsche, et al. (1984) surveyed programs to determine which activities were most effective in dealing

with dropouts. While he reported that the most effective program descriptors were self-concept development, work attitudes/habits, inter-personal/life skills, motivation, work experience, employability skills, basic academic skills, and job training skills, no criteria for effectiveness was listed.

In similar fashion, Camyd-Freixas, et al. (1986) reported that effective programs could be grouped into social support programs, academic remediation/development programs, alternative programs, and work experience. These categories were presumably based on the researchers' review of statistics and program information, but again no indications of effectiveness was reported. The authors did note, however, that "BPS needs comprehensive drop-out prevention programs that combine social supports, academic interventions, and program alternatives (p. 3.)," thus supporting the contention that successful programs must reduce alienation. A further assumption was that program alternatives would deal with relevance, interest, and/or perceived need. but how these academic interventions would be tailored was not discussed.

Christie et al. (1989) studied the use of micro-computers with high risk and minority adolescents. Their findings suggest that a program utilizing technology might at least be perceived to be relevant. Unfortunately, they found no significant differences between computer and non-computer sites where both groups of students made sizeable short-term gains in the tested skill areas. Significantly, the researchers noted that the students demonstrated an increased sense of social integration and bonding during the course of the instructional process, but whether these increases were found in both groups was not reported. Even so, this connection and bonding may well help to reduce drop-out behavior, as the researchers suggest.

Two studies deserve a brief comment. In the Texas Dropout Survey Project (1986) researchers listed a number of programs and characterized them in terms of organization and support. While the paper's title Program Responses - Their Nature and Effectiveness, suggests that these characteristics indicate some measure of effectiveness, no information was provided in the abstract report.

Springstead, et al. (1981), examined over 1,200 migrant students from 35 school districts using a self-reporting survey. In common with the other studies, findings suggested that counselling - a supportive service - may be an effective strategy in dropout prevention, although the services which were actually provided tended to be minimal. Again, the issue of alienation is suggested although the report provides no specifics in this regard.

CONCLUSIONS

What can be gleaned from these studies? First, the data suggest that there are no universally accepted descriptors for dropouts. While listed descriptors may suggest why a student dropped out of school, they do not include causal or enabling variables. Even variables such as gender, race, and age are largely omitted from the reports. This omission leads the writer to suspect that many of the listed factors are not really causes of dropping out behavior, but may be symptomatic instead.

Despite a lack of definitive data, the reviewed studies suggest that students leave school because of failure, irrelevancy, and alienation. This may be exacerbated by pregnancy or other so-called "unacceptable behaviors". While studies suggest that successful programs must address

alienation, and be relevant and supportive, the data are only conjectural on these points.

Finally, the issue of effective was not discussed in the studies, although it seems obvious that a successful dropout prevention program should reduce dropping out behaviors. Presumably, these data have not been reported because the appropriate variables have not, or could not be assessed. In summary, of the reviewed studies suggest that since we know why students drop out of school, and we know what will keep them in school, we can provide these services to make an effective program. Since no specifics are provided, available research does not help us to know what works and why.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications growing out of the reported findings can be significant to program developers, although they are far from definitive. Practice suggests that despite the lack of research, programs designed to reduce dropout prone behavior will continue to be developed on the basis of common sense, and with some reference to what others have said is effective. If this practice continues, dropout rates should not be expected to go down, although there is always the possibility for luck and creative accounting. There are, however, a number of areas which should continue to be investigated, but these will certainly not provide short-term solutions to the problem.

Long term studies of pupil participation in school and out-of-school activities should be conducted given the supposition that connectiveness and the reduction of alienation will lead to school retention. In

addition, short-term studies using qualitative research, surveys, or interviews should be conducted to determine what kinds of programs students like, and the relevance of these programs to perceived district and student needs and objectives. Programs such as the Migrant Computer Program (Springstead, et al. 1981) might be examined for effectiveness using typical evaluation strategies; e.g. cost/benefits, increases in test scores, reductions in absenteeism, completion of homework, and the like. These effectiveness studies could then be tied to studies of staff and teachers perception to help determine what works and why.

Finally, the issue of alienation and connectiveness for teachers and for students should be carefully examined. While data in this area is by no means conclusive, it seems logical that if students and their teachers are committed, in all probability they will be connected as well. These studies should also be supported under the premise that youngsters at all ages and grades, and from all socio-economic milieu, need a supportive environment; one which fosters caring, relevance, and content.